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Let's Get Digital

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New Power Press Kits will help you get noticed

You've got the power! Or you do now, anyway. Impact Artist Promotions just released a new promotional tool for artists, musicians, actors, and anyone else out there with a talent to show off.

The tool in question? Power Press Kits - kind of like the press kits of years past, but so much cooler and more technologically advanced. For one thing, they're completely electronic - everything's online - so you can say a cheerful goodbye to spending an exorbitant amount of money and time on making hundreds of expensive copies in Kinko's, reproducing your CD and photo, and organizing and mailing your kits. There's a much easier method - and it's not even very pricey.



Look for it



"PPKs started as a new product but quickly took on a life of their own after initial market research and testing," says Ron Schock, president of Impact Artist Promotions. "It is now the primary product of IAP and operating as its own subdivision. IAP is pretty well set with a solid, long-term customer base and focuses primarily on original music through relationships we have established with producers and small labels like Ivory Productions and more. The PPKs, on the other hand, are wide open to all comers from numerous genres of music and well beyond music into models, actors and more."

The concept of an online press kit seems like a no-brainer, but it takes someone dedicated to actually put the idea into motion. Schock was that someone.

"Like any idea or invention, I suppose it comes from everything that has made you who you are as a person through your life experiences leading up to that point," he says. "I've been involved with marketing, Web development, programming and the music industry for many years so that whole foundation was already in place. However, there was one absolutely defining day where PPKs literally came to me like a freight train. I was driving home from the office trying to wind down and not think and just like that, while sitting unassumingly at a red light, my mind was being bludgeoned with every detail, name, URL, promotional concept, programming framework, acronyms, etc. from start to finish. It was a pretty surreal, intense and welcome experience. I ran into the house when I got home, didn't even take the time to kiss my wife (sorry hon) or pet the dog, grabbed a legal pad and scratched out three pages of details in about ten minutes. Didn't sleep a whole lot that night, either. The next day, I purchased numerous domain names and established the trademarks, locked the notes in my safe and we started programming."

So why are PPKs so important to this generation? And are they user-friendly?

"Anyone looking to get ahead needs the right promotional tools to do so," Schock says. "However, most emerging or startup artists cannot afford those tools. To date, we've invested tens-of-thousands of dollars in development time so that the product would completely dynamic and absolutely turnkey; allowing users to register and setup a PPK in its entirety within minutes through our automated system. Second, we took great care in developing the admin panel

interface so that it is very easy to understand and use, loaded with fail-safe checks and balances yet is extremely versatile and functional across all genres. If a particular feature doesn't apply to a user, then by default that link and functionality don't appear on their PPK (i.e. an actor, model or photographer doesn't necessarily have MP3s to upload so the MP3 player and the audio link don't appear on their PPK). PPKs include the framework, functionality and features and complete user control that a custom website costing thousands of dollars would include and for only \$7.99 a month! \$7.99 a month? Not bad, when you consider all the money it would cost to build a hard-copy press kit from scratch. Plus, every user gets a 15-day free trial, with all of the perks of the site included, so that he or she can test the waters without making any commitments.

"In our experience it only takes a user one or two days to make up their mind," Schock says. "Our free trial period users get the same complete functionality that the subscribers get. I don't expect to go test drive a car and only be able to turn left with no brakes and not use the cruise control or stereo, so I certainly wouldn't expect our users to make their decision based on a half-assed trial period that restricted full functionality. And after they subscribe, it's the same deal. We launch new enhancements and upgrades monthly - if not weekly - and everyone who is onboard or testing at the time immediately receives full use of those upgrades."

And what's really cool about the PPKs is that you'll have the complete freedom to design your PPK just the way you like it.

"We felt it was extremely critical to provide a wide variety of high-impact, versatile image-laden themes that the user could switch between in seconds with no knowledge of HTML coding so that each PPK could have its own personality to fit the user content or given mood at the time and not just be sterile, generic and boring," Schock says.

"We've used other electronic press kit products for our artists in past years and only got to change the color from red to black to blue. PPKs promote people who are passionately expressing their art and their talent and we take that just as seriously as they do and believe that the themes need to further enforce those attributes rather than suck the energy from them.

"We currently have more than sixty standard themes that were custom-designed by our artists and that number grows weekly with user requests and needs. We also offer completely custom designed themes to subscribing members where they can upload hi-res photos and instructions. One of our artists will then design their theme and a programmer will assign the theme to their PPK only. Even when they have their own custom theme, they can switch to any of our general themes and back again whenever and however often they desire, again, requiring no knowledge of HTML coding whatsoever."

Even if you have very little web knowledge, you'll be able to set up your own PPK without any help, in the time that it would take to make and eat a PB&J sandwich. Yup, that's fast!

"Our technology allows the artist to register for and completely setup their own PPK at 3 a.m. (or anytime of course) within 15 minutes average, and be sending them out immediately with no intervention whatsoever from our staff," Schock says. "They can upload MP3s and photos and change any of the content, including the entire theme, 24/7. That is another feature that we know is extremely critical to the user's promotion. There's nothing worse than waiting for your web guy to get around to uploading your new MP3 or removing the name and pictures of the bass player you just fired. PPK gives the user complete dynamic content control so they can stagger in from the studio in the middle of the night, upload their newest track on the spot and send their PPK out to radio stations within minutes."

But don't fret - while they won't hold your hand through the initial setup process (unless, of course, you want them to), they also won't leave you on your own if you need assistance.

"Our team constantly monitors every setup, what they do, how they do it, what they use and what they need; plus we encourage users to give us their feedback," says Schock. "This is a constantly evolving product based on the user's needs and desires, not just what we think is right for them. I will never allow us to become complacent or think we've got it right. That continues to be a great asset for us and it's rewarding to hear the compliments from users when they're so surprised an actual person replies to their emails and appreciates and acts on their input.

And while you might usually just associate press kits with musicians, Schock says that his PPKs can be useful to anyone trying to promote themselves.

"It's been exciting and interesting to watch the new setups come in daily," he says. "It was critical to me to make PPKs extremely versatile to everyone looking to self promote, not just musicians. Since we soft-launched the product in June of 2007, we've seen users from every genre of music, actors, comedians, models, voice-over talent, professional

speakers, bagpipe players, poets, club DJs, you name it. We currently have versatility like a reggae band from the British Virgin Islands, a rapper from the UK, voice-over talents from across the U.S. who are professional on-air DJs, runner-up in the Ms. Bikini Universe competition and a NYC legendary radio broadcaster - to name a few. Users are really from every corner of the world including islands that we had to look up because we didn't know they existed." He's a Softie

Schock may be a business man, but he has a soft spot in his heart for U.S. military members - and he'll give them all free extended subscriptions to his service.

"We donate free extended subscriptions to U.S. military personnel," he says. "Our men and women in service have always been near to my heart from the time I sat on my grandfather's knee and listened to his stories of WWII and then later the stories of my late father-in-law who served in Korea and my wife's uncle who served in Vietnam and more. In fact, that's what really ingrained the sacrifice and contribution into my mind and heart forever. My closest friend is a Marine; a coworker has a daughter who is a Marine; extended family members have served; one of my childhood heroes was Congressional Medal of Honor winner Audie Murphy, whose gravesite I reverently visited when I traveled to D.C. In fact, that very trip was courtesy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization because I was honored to win their Voice of Democracy patriotic speech contest for my home state. So, you get the point.

"I have the deepest respect and admiration for the U.S. Armed Forces and giving them a free subscription is a very minor thing that I will do for as long as I am able. One of the first military subscriber's words really hit my heart and made me realize that my gift was truly appreciated and important, at least to him, when he said, '[Being musicians] is a way for us to all unwind to escape the reality of what we do: fight America's wars (which sometimes aren't the most popular things in the world).'

Whether you agree with the causes or not, the men and women fighting them are our brothers and sisters and are doing it so that we can continue to live our lives free and with little worry, and promote our talents to realize our dreams. I can't possibly express how important that is to me and my family." Did Someone Say Free?

"We give a free PPK subscription for every seventh PPK that a label, producer, management agency purchases; we give a free extended subscription to all IAP website customers; and we run different promotions where users can win a free subscription," Schock says.

And get THIS: If you're reading closely, you might just get a free PPK.

"The first five artists to setup a free trial and then email free@myppk.com and include the code 'I won through Philadelphia PLAY Mag' will receive a free six month subscription!)," he says.

"Another part of my plan (yes, scribbled on that legal pad that is locked in the safe) is to land significant corporate sponsors and advertisers in the near future that may allow us to reduce the price or even negate it altogether," Schock continues. "September was only our third full month of being live on the Internet and we exceeded 90,000 hits. PPKs are growing virally through our users, and signups for free trials and subscriptions increase weekly. The advertising attraction is definitely built in. In the mean time, we need to keep the power running to the Power Press Kits and our users will be the first to tell you that they're getting a LOT of bang for their buck."

So go ahead, kids. Put yourself out there. PLAY'll be watching for you - send us your PPK.

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